

# GRANDDAD HULL

## Some Recollections

by

## His Grandson

**Benjamin Forrest Poscover**

(February 2001)

He was known by several names: formally as Dr. George Forrest Hull, MD, to most as Doc Hull, to his immediate Virginia family as Uncle Doc, and to me as Granddad. The first thing one noticed about him was his bearing. He stood over six foot two inches tall, had a square jaw and looked you right in the eye. His mind was razor sharp with a memory for endless tales that were a source of amusement and humor. There was an air of confidence that he carried with his professionalism. When calling on the sick, many would say that they felt better when they heard his footstep at their door. He was truly an alpha male and the only thing that ever came close to defeating him was old age.

His appearance was extraordinary. He dressed the part of a country doctor having an old Virginia country background and a degree from the University of Virginia. He looked the part from the top of his head to his shoes. He liked broad rimmed, Stetson hats that were gray in color. The crown was conventional rather than western. When I was stationed in Fort Sill, Oklahoma I wanted to buy him a western hat at the Lawton Oklahoma Hat Factory. I didn't get around to it, but did look up Eugene "Jerky" Vandevender who was also stationed there and was from Durbin. Jerky was a cook. I told him that I was being transferred to Fort Bliss Texas and asked if he would buy Granddad a hat for me as I didn't have time. I gave him \$25.00. I had forgotten all about the incident until over 35 years later when Jerky reminded me that he had done as I had asked. I then remembered a wide brimmed cowboy hat being in Granddad's house when we cleaned it following the death of my Grandmother. I took it home and wore it fishing several times. It was perfect for shading one's eyes. Old Jerky sure did a great job in selecting that hat.

Granddad's suits were wool, and expensive. He wore a detachable, winged collar and favored polka dotted Ascot ties believing that a man was not properly dressed unless he wore one. His shirt, with the collar removed, served as his nightshirt which he wore over long underwear, wool in the winter and cotton in summer. He also wore a matching handkerchief in his left pocket. He usually dressed in a vest except in summer. His shoes were patented leather and were covered with spats. His glasses were pince nez, which were attached to a ribbon. He carried them in either the pocket of his coat or his vest. I never recall seeing him formally clean his glasses, but I did see him on numerous occasions wet the lens by putting them in his mouth and then wiping them off with either his handkerchief or tie. He also carried a gold watch and chain that was attached to a vest buttonhole and the watch was carried in the vest pocket. A cane rounded out his ensemble. He loved to dress and when fully attired, his appearance was very, very impressive.

One of my jobs was holding Granddad's coat as he put it on. I would have to stand on a chair or ottoman to reach high enough to do this but I was and still am very good at holding coats while others put them on. Once we had gone to see a University of Virginia football game. We always ate lunch in the hotel. The coat rack was next to the shoeshine stand. There was a young black boy probably four or five years old dressed in colonial attire that held men's coats as they came for them. He was cute and very good. I calculate that the money he made on tips that day enabled him to never have to work again in his life. I was very jealous.

We always ate in the hotel's dining room. One time Granddad ordered a filet and when they brought his dinner he said, "I ordered a filet and they brought me a damn old fish." Granddad did not eat fish. He always tucked his napkin either in the top of his trousers or in his collar. We had finished eating and when Granddad stood up to leave dishes went everywhere. Unknowingly, he had tucked the tablecloth along with the napkin into his trousers. I'll tell you we got a lot of attention that day, as much from the scattered dishes as for my Grandfather's colorful language. Waiters come from everywhere.

Going to football games on Saturdays in the fall was a favorite pastime of the family. The University of Virginia and the University of West Virginia were equidistance from Durbin. Granddad was a graduate of the University of Virginia and WVU was the State University. When I was growing up we would travel to one or the other depending which one was playing at home and the significance of the game. The morning would begin with my Mother leaving the house early to help get Granddad ready which was no small struggle. Usually, the most exasperating thing was finding a collar button or missing cuff link.

Our entourage included my Granddad, Grandmother, Mom, Dad, my Uncle George, and myself. We'd pile into one car and off we'd go. Dad would drive and Granddad would sit in the front seat. He smoked cigars incessantly. They made my Grandmother sick. She would stand it as long as she could and then would complain that they were making her sick and would he please stop smoking. As a concession, he would roll the window down about an inch. In winter this about froze us out. It was better to freeze than to be smothered by cigar smoke. He didn't smoke a cigar like most people but rather would take a good third into his mouth and chew on it. Once I asked him why he didn't chew tobacco and he said that it made him sick.

On these trips, my poor Uncle George had the responsibility of relieving my Mother in taking care of me, especially in taking me to the bathroom. It seemed that my urinary bladder had no capacity and at the most inopportune moment I would have to go. My Mother, being the worrier she was, felt that I had to be accompanied to the restrooms and this task fell to my Uncle. I don't know how my Dad got out of this. I suppose that he just put his foot down. No amount of threats or hard looks deterred me from going when I felt the slightest urge. I even suffered the indignant threat of a rubber band being placed around my penis "to help me hold it". I knew it was just a threat but my feelings were hurt none the less. I remember when we went to the Virginia-North Carolina game; North Carolina had an all-American by the name of Charlie "Coo-Choo" Justice. There was much anticipation in wanting to see him play and did he play, every time he got the ball he scored a touchdown; seven in all. My poor Uncle did not see him score one touchdown as when Choo Choo was scoring, George was in the restroom taking care of me. Needless to say, my Uncle and my relationship over the years was tenuous.



Keeping Granddad supplied with collars, matching shirts and spats was quite a chore. The place where we normally bought them was at Goldberg's in Elkins. This was one elegant men's store. I always loved going there and looking around. Once my Mother bought my Father a pair of pig skinned gloves. I don't recall ever having seen a piece of men's clothing so well made nor elegant. Mr. Goldberg had two sons, Izzy and Biggie. Biggie was quite an athlete and eventually was admitted into the Professional Football Hall of Fame having played for the Pittsburgh Steelers. The story goes that Mr. Goldberg was watching his son playing a game and said to the man seated next to him, "That's my son making all of those tackles ." The man said, "is he?" Mr. Goldberg replied, "No Biggie."

I watched my Granddad use his watch all of the years that I knew him to take others' pulses and mine. The watch was given to him by a murderer. The man's name was Frank Hyre. He ran a saloon-restaurant on the corner across from the Mayor's office in Durbin. He was a large man weighing over 300 pounds. It was said that when he drank he would become angry and beat his wife. She was a slip of a woman weighing less than 100 pounds. It was also said that she could hold her own against him. However, one night in a drunken rage, he stomped her to death. He was convicted of murder and taken to Moundsville prison to be hung. He asked my Grandfather to come to his execution but Granddad said no. He did visit him in prison and Mr. Hyre willed my Grandfather his rifle and watch. Following my Grandfather's death, my Uncle was given the rifle and I the watch. The story continues that when they hung Mr. Hyre he was decapitated. Following the hanging, a group of men were recounting the incident at the Durbin Post Office. When it was mentioned that when Mr. Hyre was hung his head came off, someone asked, "What did they do next?" The postmaster in disgust said, "hell, what do you think they did. They shot him." My Uncle told me that Mr. Hyre was the last man to be hung in West Virginia.

### Early Years Stories:

Granddad was born on a farm in Hightown, Virginia. The town is located in Highland County, which gets its name from the fact that its mean elevation is higher than any other county east of the Mississippi. He was one of ten children, nine boys and one girl. His father, Joseph, inherited the farm from his father. Joseph was a farmer, raised livestock, and had extensive land holdings. Granddad's Great Grandfather entered the Valley of Virginia in 1776. So the family goes way back in the history of that area.

The house, known as the Manor House, still stands and remains in the hands of the family. Although this wasn't always so. The house and 30 acres of property were put up for sale. My Grandfather made arrangements with his brothers to buy it. Two of the brothers who lived in the area were to go to the sale but on the way to Monterey they got into an argument and went home. The sale went to another family. The man who bought it didn't live in the house for one year, as he was afraid. He thought that no Hull would ever allow anyone other than a Hull to live there and if anyone tried they'd be shot.

Today the house and property are back in Hull hands having been bought by Ray Hull. Allie Hull, his daughter, and her husband Bob Maxwell live there and have done extensive

modifications but still maintain the integrity of the house. During the Civil War, Union soldiers returning from the Battle of McDowell, stayed at the farm. Doug Hull told me that they actually stabled their horses in the house. The women and children hid in limestone caves that are found on the property. When the soldiers left, they burned the farm and outbuildings. During a recent renovation by Bob and Allie, they found scorched timbers in the house. I suppose that the family used any materials they could salvage to rebuild.

We never talked about the Civil War. When it was brought up, Granddad got very angry. He said that there was no reason ever to place the Union in jeopardy. It should never have been split. One thing one never did was to make Granddad angry. There is a story about the Hulls and the beginnings of the Civil War. It seems that each county in Virginia sent a delegation to Richmond to vote for or against secession. A Hull was in the Highland County delegation. It had the charge to stay with the Union. However, on approaching the voting place in Richmond, they noticed several bodies hanging from trees. When they inquired about this, they were told that those individuals were against secession. Highland County aligned itself with the South.

In the Manor House, there is a wide hallway that terminates into a large dining room, which abuts the kitchen. The hallway looks wide enough so that one could drive a large wagon through it. I suppose the thinking for this type of construction was to provide cooling ventilation in the summer. Individual rooms are on either side of the hall and can be closed off to conserve heating and privacy. A wide stairway is on the left side and leads to the upstairs. Individual bedrooms are on both sides of a hall with two dormitory type rooms found at the end.

The Hull reunion has been held at the Home Place the past few years. When I walk to the front door and look in to the house, the stories my Grandfather told about the place come to life. He said that his Father would take his tobacco and twist it into ropes and hang it in the hall to dry. This could either be chewed or smoked. One time he was having a business meeting when the boys got into a fight in the hallway. The noise was so loud that his Father couldn't conduct business and in his anger grabbed anything he could

to hit the boys and break up the fight. The first thing at hand was the twist tobacco and Granddad said that his Father beat up his year's supply.

Another way they made chewing tobacco was to place a thin layer of tobacco in a crock and cover it with molasses. This process was repeated until the crock was filled. The crock was capped with a wooden lid that fit into the crock. A heavy weight such as a large rock was placed on the lid. Overtime, this pressed the tobacco and molasses into a block that could be cut into plugs for chewing.

When I look into the larger dormitory type rooms, I hear my Grandfather laughing and telling that in the winter time, the first thing you did when you got out of bed in the morning was to pour the pee out of your boot. It was a long, cold walk to the outdoors john. Also, it was told that the first one up in the morning got the best clothes and the best horse

It was said that all the boys did was to hunt and fish, however, this was not entirely true. They worked the farm as well. Granddad bought a farm on the Old Pike above Bartow. In the summer, when they made hay, he would sometimes help them mow. He would use the scythe or cradle and was the most skilled at this of anyone there.

There were stories about two former slaves, Big Jim and Aunt Mariah. One of the things Joseph enjoyed were the dogs that were used for hunting. He had great affection for them and at times would ask Big Jim to cut out a steer and kill it so it could be fed to the dogs. Big Jim would do this. He would kill the steer by hitting it beside the head with his fist. Big Jim was a powerful man.

My Grandfather brought Aunt Mariah to his home in Durbin when he set up housekeeping. My Mother loved Aunt Mariah and would tell the story that when they would sit down to dinner; he would always serve her first. He would say, "Aunt Mariah, what would you like?" Aunt Mariah would always reply, "Dr. Hull, I'll just take a small po'tion of each." I suppose she stayed with the family until her death.

Entertainment was where you found it. It was not unusual for itinerant entertainers to travel from farm to farm getting money and a possible meal for their services. One day a man with a dancing bear came by. My Great Grandfather Joseph asked him how much he would charge to let his dogs fight the bear. He said that the dogs were getting lazy and needed the experience. The man agreed thinking that Joseph was foolish as the bear could easily kill the dogs. Little did he know that the dogs "had been raised huntin and fightin' bear." The man tethered the bear with a long chain so it couldn't run away but would have plenty of room to fight. Then the dogs were turned loose. Well they went after the bear and it was soon apparent that the bear was in real trouble. The man threw the money at Joseph's feet and begged him to call off the dogs which he did. The man then took his bear and hurried down the road. When he got a good distance away and when Joseph went back into the house, the boys sneaked to where the dogs were penned and turned them loose. They immediately took off after the bear. The man hearing the dogs turned and saw that they were coming after him. He started running with his bear and in a panic he and the bear ran right through the door and into the house of a widow woman who lived along the road. In my mind's eye, I can see the expression on that woman's face when the man and bear burst into her home.

Hunting bear gave the family the greatest, in my opinion, Hull story. Every member has heard it. My Grandfather told this story many times but the telling I most remember was the one by Uncle Will, one of Granddad's brothers. I was really sick with the measles. They couldn't get them to come out on me. Getting measles to come out broke the fever and from that point on you would get well. Uncle Will and his Grandson Billy came to visit Granddad. Hearing about me, he and Billy would come and spend time with me. Billy would sing me the song Billy Boy and Uncle Will would tell stories.



I remember Uncle Will as being a kindly man. He wore a beard. The following story about the bear hunt is the one he told to me. It seemed that a huge bear had been raiding the Hull's animals killing both cattle and sheep for some time. It was very crafty and had eluded their best efforts to kill it. After one incident, they made up their minds that they weren't going to come home until it was dead. After a long and arduous hunt, the dogs cornered the bear in a laurel thicket. Uncle Jim, another of Granddad's brothers, always liked to run with the dogs and usually outdistanced the other hunters. He heard the dogs fighting the bear and when he got to the fight he saw that the dogs were attacking the bear in a very limited space in the laurel thicket. They couldn't maneuver, as they should. This was to the advantage of the bear and it was killing the dogs. Uncle Jim crawled on his hands and knees into the thicket. The bear was reared back on its hind legs fighting the dogs. Uncle Jim was a crack shot and always went to the head, which produced a quick kill. He did this again shooting at the bear's head. However, due to the angle, the bullets bounced off its skull. The bear saw Uncle Jim and came for him. In the limited space there was no where for Uncle Jim to go so when the bear charged he forced the gun down the bear's throat and pulled the trigger. As luck would have it, he had one bullet left and it killed the bear. When the other hunters got to the scene, they found Uncle Jim sitting on the bear's carcass holding the mangled body of his favorite dog on his lap. He was crying. When they examined the gun, the teeth of bear had dented the barrel. When they examined the bear, they said that every one of Uncle Jim's shots had hit the bear and the area where the bullets hit could be covered with a silver dollar. That was some feat of shooting. Once at a Hull Reunion I repeated this story. Later in the day, two men from different parts of the family and at different times approached me and told me that they had Uncle Jim's gun and one could see the teeth marks of the bear on the barrel.

My Father won a liar's contest by telling this story with a different twist. In the mountains in the spring, a plant grows that the mountain people are partial to. It is called the Ramp. When one eats ramps, their breath takes on such an offensive odor that the eater cannot be in the presence of others. It seemed that Uncle Jim was particularly partial to ramps and had been eating large quantities for some time before this hunt. So, when the bear charged him, he stuck the gun barrel down the bear's throat and pulled the trigger. The gun clicked empty. Uncle Jim breathed what he thought was his last breath and the bear rolled over dead. The ramps did it in.

Granddad's Mother had a favorite friend who would visit her on a regular basis for lunch. She always drove her own horse and buggy. To reach the house, she had to cross over a bridge and when she did the horse would rear and buck. It was all that she could do to control the horse. She'd tell Grandmother Hull that she just didn't know what was the matter with that horse because every time she went over the bridge it went crazy and it was a wonder she wasn't thrown and killed. She said that she just might have to get rid of it. The reason for the horse's strange behavior was that the boys, knowing the routine of their Mother's friend, would hide under the bridge with sharp sticks. When the poor woman would ride over it, the boys would poke the horse's belly with the sticks causing it to buck and rear.

There were lots of parties and dances. The Hull brothers being handsome and I suppose affluent were in demand. My Grandfather's favorite tune was Turkey-In-The-Straw. It seems that Granddad took the "prettiest girl in the valley" to a dance and when returning her home the horse and buggy ran off the road into a show drift and turned over. The girl's leg was broken. I can imagine how difficult it must have been to explain this to her Father and answering the question, "Why weren't you paying attention to where the horse was going?"

They all went to school in a one room school house. The boy's nemesis was a girl named Sal Skinner. Sal could best the boys at any competition they could come up with no matter what they tried. Well, the boys all got together and decided to challenge her to a peeing contest. They thought that this was one match she couldn't possibly win. They said that on the grand day, Sal reared back and threw it six clapboards higher than any boy in class.

Aunt Lucy had a suitor named George Brock. The boys didn't like George and I always thought it was because Aunt Lucy was the only girl sibling and no boy would ever be good enough for her. George went to Augusta Military Academy and when home on vacation was wont to wear his uniform. He came in for much criticism by the brothers.

One time, George was going to make a speech at the school. The brothers got there early and sat on the front row. This so unnerved George that he couldn't make the speech and had to leave the podium. This also produced a strong urge in him to urinate. He did so back stage into an empty, tin bucket and "it rattled so loud that everyone there could hear it." This further added to George's embarrassment and he left immediately. This story was told with much glee. The story always ended with, "We scared the p--- out of him."

Joseph wanted to give each of his sons land as their inheritance so that he could stand on his porch and see their farms. However my Grandfather took his inheritance to finance his schooling. Uncle Ernest took his and became a businessman running a store in Bartow W.Va. Aunt Lucy eloped with Uncle George getting married in the rotunda of the Capital in Washington, D.C. Joseph could not accept this and disinherited her. However, before his death, he wrote a letter to her saying that all was forgiven and to come home. I don't know about her inheritance. She never came home to live.

Uncle Ernest had marital difficulties and had a nervous breakdown. He was committed to a hospital for treatment. My Grandfather was to meet him on the day he was released from the hospital. For some reason, he couldn't make it. Uncle Ernest went to a hotel and committed suicide by cutting his throat with his razor. I've heard it said that my Grandfather never forgave himself for not meeting Uncle Ernest. I never heard him ever mention this nor say anything about Uncle Ernest's death.



## **Education:**

Granddad attended Randolph Macon Academy and then the University of Virginia graduating with a degree in Medicine. While there he also lettered in football. Once his Father came to visit him and watched a football practice. After it was over, he said to Granddad that he had sent him to the University to get an education not to get killed. His son, also a medical doctor, could not understand how one could attend medical school and play football at the same time. He'd often say that medical school must have been different in those days. When asked how he decided to become a doctor, Granddad would say that he was on the train to Charlottesville to enter the University of Virginia and study law. While on the train he met the family lawyer, Pinkney Jones. They started drinking and three days later he woke up enrolled in the University of Virginia Medical School. As interesting as this story was, I believe the actual truth was much more complex.

Upon graduating from the University of Virginia, Granddad took a further year's study in obstetrics at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. While there, he saw Ben Hur on the stage starring Francis X. Bushman. He often talked about how impressive the staging of the chariot race was and wondered how they did it.

## **Early Life in Durbin:**

He came to Durbin, West Virginia answering the request of an aging doctor who advertised for an assistant. This was doing the time of the lumber boom and the old doctor's practice had grown to such a size that he was having difficulty managing it. Soon all of the old doctor's patients were coming to Granddad and he retired. Granddad married Virginia Sale from Orange County Virginia and brought her to his newly built house in Durbin. They had one child, my Mother. My biological Grandmother had internal goiter and my Grandfather was taking her to The Johns Hopkins Hospital for further treatment when she died on the train. My Mother was very young when her Mother died. My Grandfather married again when my Mother was fourteen. His new wife was Monna Heltzel. She was the Grandmother that I knew. She worked as a bookkeeper for a lumber company and had contracted smallpox. Granddad was her doctor. She was a great beauty.

Lumber companies built their mills close to railroad tracks for ease of loading and transporting their lumber. Granddad would visit his patients in the lumber camps by riding a handcar. This rode on the train rails and carried one or two people. It got its name because the mechanism was such that one had to "pump it by hand to make it go." He visited his other patients by horse. My Sister has the medical saddlebags that he carried on his rounds.

Granddad gave people nicknames. Most young boys were called "Bill", young girls "Sis", married women "Mom", and older women "Mother" or "Granny". He did give nicknames to two individuals who wore them all of their lives. One was Howard Dehaven. The Dehavens were tiny people. They weren't dwarfs but were simply small.

Howard was less than five feet tall and probably weighed eighty-five pounds. One day Granddad heard a commotion outside his office and went to investigate. There was Howard, drunk, trying to fight Glenn Gregg. Glenn was over six feet tall and weighted between two hundred and fifty and two hundred and seventy-five pounds. Howard was pushing the fight and Granddad yelled, "Knock him stiff Dehaven, knock him stiff." From that day on until his death, Howard was known as Knock'm Stiff Dehaven or just plain Knock'm Dehaven.

The other name was the one he gave to Hudson Hull. The Hulls lived next door to Granddad but were no relation. One day Hudson came out of his house with a hat on. Granddad was sitting on the front porch and saw him. He yelled at Hudson saying, "That hat makes you look like a sap." From that day on, Hudson was known as Sap Hull.

### **Early Recollections:**

I was born in my Grandfather's home. He delivered me. My Mother would trust no other to attend her. I weighed three and one-half pounds. No, I don't remember this. My earliest memory of him was his holding me over his head saying undecipherable things to me. I suppose the thing that fixes this memory in my mind is that earlier Kitty Spencer and myself were practicing a little exploratory anatomy in the loft of my Granddad's garage. I was very impressed with Kitty but she not with me. It seemed that she took baths regularly with her brothers. My sister wasn't born for nine more years. The reason I couldn't understand my Granddad was my fear that he might know what we had been doing, as my clothes were a mess. I wasn't too adept at dressing myself. At what age does guilt over sex set in? I was four years old at the time.

I liked sitting on Granddad's lap. He had a small potbelly and I would use it as a ledge. I also liked climbing all over his bookcase. The bookcase held his medical books. In later years, I learned some more about women through these books. Some of the things I saw in them were really horrific. About half the boys in Durbin also learned these things, as looking through his medical books was a favorite pastime when adults weren't about.

For some reason, Granddad gave me a new, red tricycle. It wasn't my birthday as it is in November and there was no snow on the ground when I got my trike. I remember, I was in front of Hope Hull's (no relation) house playing when he and my Mother came to give it to me. Hope had a driveway that sloped to the street. Granddad and Mom kept trying to get me to ride down the driveway and I wouldn't do it because I was scared. They gave up in disgust. When all had left, I rode down the slope and did it any number of times after that. I remembered thinking why was I scared to do this? I also remember the disappointment on my Mother and Granddad's faces at my not doing it when they first wanted me too.

The first time I really bonded with my Granddad as men was when he was taking care of me. We were going to take an enema together. Taking enemas was very big in those days. I remember how enthusiastic I was at this prospect. He gave me the enema

and then one for himself and said that we had to lie on the floor so it would take effect. Well, I couldn't wait and had to get rid of that affront to my person. I think that up until that time this was the very worse moment of my life.

Having your body purged of whatever was in it making you sick was standard practice in those days. One of Granddad's favorite medicines was calomel. It was Mercuric chloride. This was a powerful purgative but having mercury as part of its formula, one was given castor oil to get rid of it. Mercury is poisonous. When this treatment was finished, it was said that one could breathe in at one end and the breath would pass through and out the other.

Cap pistols were very popular for guys my age. It seemed everyone had a cowboy cap pistol, in fact, some wore a brace of two. We had many battles and would get our caps at the Hiner Hardware Store. Once they had a cap pistol that was shaped like a little automatic pistol. I really wanted that gun but wondered how I could get the dime it cost. Granddad was an easy mark but usually not for frivolous things so I had to use my considerable skill at getting money out of him. It took some time but finally he gave me the dime and I went off to get the pistol. For some reason I didn't walk down the steps to downtown as I usually did, but rather walked down a path that ran along the Willhide's fence. I was flipping the dime into the air and catching it, playing like I was a gangster in the movies when one toss went over the fence. I ran to the gate to get on the other side and retrieve my dime. When I got to the place where I thought it had dropped, there was a big, old, coiled black snake. There was no way I was going to disturb that snake, dime or no dime. What to do? I was desperate, so back I went to Granddad. He had no patience at all for my hard luck story so no new dime. In fact, I think I remember a bit of disgust in his voice when he said no. Today, thinking back on this, I realize how preposterous this true story must have sounded.

He checked on our family almost every day. On one occasion, my Dad bought my Mother an automatic washing machine for her birthday. Both were proud of this as it represented quite an expenditure and was a new innovation. So when Granddad made his visit, my Dad proudly showed it to him. Granddad said, "Hell Hip, you might as well have bought her a mule." Poor Dad.

### Accidents:

Granddad was the Mayor of Durbin. One of his duties was to check on the flow of chlorine gas into the water reservoir that held the town's water. A town workman assisted him in this. The mechanism for dispensing the chlorine was kept in a brick house constructed for this purpose. The house had a metal door. Once while adjusting the chlorine flow, the valve broke filling the house with chlorine gas. While trying to escape the door closed and jammed. By some feat of strength, they broke the door down and got out but by the time they did, both had been exposed to an almost lethal amount of the gas. Somehow they made it home. Someone came to our house and told my Mother about it and she ran to Granddad's. Sometime later I went down to his house which was full of people. My Mother and Uncle were lying on the floor crying, as were others in the room.



I was sitting on the sofa beside Lois Hiner and asked her why everyone was crying. She told me that my Granddad was going to die. I didn't really understand the significance of this so I headed, undetected, upstairs to see my Granddad. I opened the door to his room and he was on the floor with a towel over his head breathing in steam that he was making. When I walked into the room he looked up and I said, "Granddad are you going to die?" He said, "Hell no Ben, sit down." So I stayed with him. He would from time to time cough and spit up phlegm. I stayed with him for quite awhile until I was missed and someone came and took me home. Later, I was told that the colored people from Frank came and stood outside the house singing hymns until they were told that my Grandfather was going to be all right. Some few years later, the man who was with Granddad died an early death and it was said that the gassing brought it about. He had been incapacitated by that experience and never was able to work again.

Granddad had other injuries. Once on a call, he was climbing a fence, tripped and fell. He tried to break his fall with his hand and in doing so ran a wire into his palm and up into his arm. In those days there were no antibiotics, sulfur drugs, nor tetanus vaccinations. It was very possible that he could develop blood poison or gangrene. He could have lost his arm and even his life. This was a serious injury. He spent several days in the hospital and eventually recovered.

One evening, Mom, Dad, and my Sister, Mary Catheryne, took a drive. This was a favorite family pastime. I stayed home as I was "too big for this type of activity." I was laying on my bed playing my ukulele when the door slammed open and Mary Catheryne burst in screaming and crying that Granddad was in an accident and was hurt. Mom and Dad helped get him to his house and by the time I got there he was in his chair with his shirt up and Dr. Burner was giving him a shot right into his broken ribs to deaden pain. There seemed to be no other injuries, but Dr. Burner said that we should take him to the hospital for further tests and observation. Granddad said that he wasn't going to any damn hospital. My Uncle George was home from school and said for me to get Granddad by his shoulders and he grabbed him by his feet. We manhandled Granddad out of the house and down the steps while Dad brought the car around to put him in. We got to the car and someone opened the back door. George backed into the car and I gave a push. Well in backing into the car, George lost hold of one of Granddad's feet and one foot went into the car and the other under it. As I said, Granddad was a big man and even though I was pretty strong I was about worn out by the time we reached the car and had to pray that I wouldn't drop him. I forgot to say that while we were carrying him, he was yelling and cussing the entire time. It was one heck of a job getting his foot from under the car and into it. When it was freed, I gave a mighty push and into the car he went. The good Lord had answered my prayer.

In Durbin, other than the church and school, the only other public place to go was the movies. Durbin had a theater with showings on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. On Saturday there were two shows, one at seven and the other at nine. You could tell you were growing up when your parents let you go to the nine o'clock show. After the show, the routine was to go to Gum's Restaurant for a coke and nabs. Granddad's office was the building next to the restaurant. One evening, I was going to Gum's after the second

show when I noticed Granddad's car. It was really late for him to be there. I went to the door and knocked and saw him peek through the blind. I suppose he thought no one could see him when he did this. He saw it was I and let me in. He was not in great shape. He was sitting in one of the waiting room chairs with a pair of teeth forceps in his hand. On the table was an almost empty bottle of whiskey. His single tooth was giving him fits and he was trying to get up the courage to pull it. I sat with him for some time and several times he would put the forceps in his mouth but just couldn't bring himself to pull that tooth. I took him home so he could go to bed. The next day he called me and wanted me to drive him to Ralph Swecker's. Ralph was a dentist and the son of Dr. Swecker. His office was in Bluegrass, Virginia. Well over we went. Dr. Swecker and Ralph were waiting for us. They took Granddad inside and I stayed with the car. Well they got the deed done. The offending tooth was removed but Granddad was a wreck. The whiskey, the trauma of having to go through this, and the Novocain all had a tremendous effect on him. It took Dr. Swecker, Ralph, Buddy Swecker, and Mrs. Swecker to get Granddad out of the office and into the car. Now what to do? I couldn't take him home in this condition so I decided to drive. Granddad acted as if he was in a trance and I hoped that he would sleep. We drove to Franklin, Mouth of Seneca, and on to Elkins. By that time, he was almost coherent so I decided to get us some supper. We stopped at the City Restaurant and I got Granddad inside. I ordered for both of us and paid for the meal. Granddad said I did well. He was doing a lot better so we drove home. At Cheat Bridge we had to stop for a train. Granddad woke up and had me back the car up as he felt we were too close to the track. We got home and I got him to bed. It was late and a long day. I was fourteen years old.

Granddad had false teeth. I believe that most upper false teeth are held in place by a vacuum, but not Granddad's. His uppers were held in place by that one tooth. Now that the tooth was gone, he had a lot of difficulty with them. It was not uncommon for them to come down when he talked and from time to time he would inadvertently spit them out. Once he was invited to be the speaker at the Kramer Reunion. The Kramer Family was a large one that had their origins in the Allegheny Mountains along the Old Pike. We got there and John Townsend introduced Granddad with much fanfare, as was his custom. Granddad began to speak and spit his teeth right out. I picked them up. John ran over with a pitcher of lemonade and washed them off. Granddad didn't miss a beat. He told the story about Uncle Jake Kramer the patriarch of the clan. It seemed that Uncle Jake loved to hunt and the type that he loved best was bear hunting. On one hunt he was training his dogs. They treed a bear and Uncle Jake wanted to get the bear out of the tree so his dogs could run it again. He tried everything, yelling, poking it with a stick, nothing worked. So he climbed the tree and out on to the limb where the bear was clinging. His intent was to shake it down but instead the limb broke and down came Uncle Jake and the bear. The dogs jumped in and in the ensuing melee, the dogs attacked Uncle Jake instead of the bear and the bear got away free.

### Eating:

I loved visiting and staying at Granddads. Eating breakfast was always a treat. My Grandmother would fry ham or bacon then would fry eggs in the grease and finally would make gravy in it. She served all this over drop biscuits, which I loaded with butter and I would eat until they got tired of cooking for me. It seemed that we also ate a lot of Sunday meals at Granddad's. Fried chicken was the main staple. My Grandmother would always begin the meal by saying, "Now let's enjoy a nice quiet meal." From that time on it was bedlam. We argued about any and everything. Politics was a favorite topic. I remembered once that my Uncle George was taking a psychology class in college and Granddad gave his interpretation of psychology by asking the question, "did the tiger kill for food or for the love of killing?" We had a great time with that one. During these discussions, I was treated as an equal and was never censored or criticized for my opinions.

Once Harper Hudson, the town Postmaster and my Granddad's best friend stopped by just as we were having dessert. It was cake and ice cream. Mr. Hudson joined us at the table and Grandmother served him dessert as well. She forgot to get him a spoon and while she was doing this, Granddad licked off his spoon and gave it to Mr. Hudson. My Grandmother was horrified at this and my Granddad said, "We drink out of the same bottle, why can't we eat off the same spoon?"

Holidays were a special treat. I always remember Thanksgivings at Granddads, Christmas at our house as no one loved Christmas more than my Dad, and Easter at Ruth's family. One Thanksgiving we had a turkey that Granddad had killed. It was the quietest Thanksgiving that we ever had as all through the meal everyone chewed their turkey very cautiously because they were afraid of breaking a tooth by biting down on some shotgun shot that might have still been in the meat.

The Spencer family lived near Granddad and one of their sons, Sterl, was fascinated by him. He would come and watch Granddad every chance that he had. Sterl was about five years old. Once, we were having lunch and eating soup. It was hot and Granddad was sipping it and making quite a bit of noise. Sterl said, "Musn't slurp your soup Doc." This gave the family one of its favorite admonitions.

### Politics:

Granddad loved politics. Being brilliant, articulate, and opinionated, he exposed his views long and loud. He was a Republican's Republican. His next door neighbor, also a Hull but no relation was just as strong a democrat. They often had discussions over the fence and some got so intense that members of each family would have to pull them back into their homes to avoid bloodshed. Granddad ran for and won a seat in the West Virginia Legislature. He lost a bid for reelection because his opponent used the slogan, "Keep Doc Hull home so he can practice medicine."



My Grandmother told me of a political rally that was held in Thornwood, a lumber town. There was a lot of drinking in the morning and after lunch when Granddad gave his speech. One person sitting in the front row was sleeping but on occasion would wake up and shout at the top of his voice, "VOTE FOR DOC HULL!" Then would pass out again. The drinking continued into the afternoon and then a fight broke out. The day was getting late and votes had to be cast before the sun went down. Somehow they got everyone together and voted them on a lumber pile. There were thirty eligible voters in the town and Granddad got thirty-one votes.

### May:

Grandmother had a maid to help her clean and cook. Her name was May. At least this was the name we called her. Her real name was Margaret Jackson but we never addressed her by that name. Her sister's name was May and this was what we called her. She never objected.

May was a part of the family. She was always included in our activities and ate with us at the dinner table. Once my Mother's cousin, Cousin Lummy came to visit. Cousin Lummy was from my Mother's Mother side of the family. She was a Southern lady through and through. She lived in Gordansville, Virginia in Orange County. I remember a conversation she had with my Mother about "nigras". She said that she would never, ever sit at a table and eat with one. Well, we were all invited to Granddad's for dinner. May served up the meal and then took her usual place at the table. I was watching Cousin Lummy very closely but she never batted an eye and seemed to enjoy her meal. My opinion of her increased exponentially as I admired how she handled this situation.

May was a protector of children. I can remember that when some of the town boys were giving me a particularly hard time, May and I set a strategy. She told me to get their attention and to call them several names, which she taught me. When they started chasing me, I was to run around the barn and there May would be waiting with a broom. The town boys were terrified of May and with good reason. As long as she was accessible, I had no difficulty along those lines. May was also a reservoir of plainspoken information particularly when it came to sex. My Mother was progressive in handling this topic and whenever I had a question she would answer it at lengths using terminology that I didn't always understand. I'd go ask May the same question and she would give me the real skinny.

May lived in Frank and would walk to Grandmother's. As far as I remember, she never missed a day of work. The distance was over a mile and on some winter days, the temperature was well below zero. She occasionally wore men's trousers but mostly only a dress. I asked her once if her legs didn't get cold. She told me that it was a poor woman who didn't have enough heat in her backside to keep her legs warm.

Once a former boyfriend came to visit May and she asked my Grandfather for time off. He said o.k. but told her not to go with this man, as he was no good. May didn't listen and they went off together. During the course of the day, he tied her to a tree

and beat her with his belt. May recovered but didn't forget. She carried a small pistol for protection. She heard that he was in town and she went looking for him. When he saw her coming he hid in the grease room of the local filling station. May found him there and started shooting. She never hit him and he escaped through the only window in the room. He left the country and was never heard from again. I would go down to the filling station and look into that room. I always marveled that first, May had missed him in such a small, confined space, and second, that he could climb through that tiny window which I didn't think was large enough for anyone to get through. I suppose that desperation can solve many problems.

May liked her drink and when she had none of her own would get into Granddad's supply. I have seen her on occasion fill a water glass with whiskey and drink it down. Grandmother was against all drink. In fact, she at one time was the national secretary of the WCTU. Everyone respected her stand on this and never did one even mention drink in

her presence. On election days, she and her friends would work along side the bootleggers to get people to vote Durbin dry. My Grandfather would keep his whiskey out of sight by hiding it in various places. He also knew of May's penchant for an occasional drink. Once, I saw him recover a bottle from his clothes hamper that was full when he put it in and now was half-empty. May had been at it. He urinated into the bottle saying that this would fix her if she ever tried that trick again. I never learned the outcome of this strategy.

### **Highland County Visits:**

We used to visit the family in Highland County. We usually went to Uncle Buzz's and Aunt Annie. Uncle Buzz's real name was Allie Porter Hull. He was a brother of Granddad. I never knew how he got the name Buzz. He was a tall, thin man like all of the Hull boys. He was also painfully shy. Grandmother used to tell the story that "when Dr. Hull took me to meet his family, the first place we stopped was at Annie's and Buzz's. He was so shy that he jumped out the back window rather than meet me." I always liked Uncle Buzz and would sit with him in his favorite place on the back porch. He had driven a nail into a porch post so he could rest his rifle on it. This would steady him as he shot at groundhogs that lived in the hill across from the house. Aunt Annie was one great cook and her meals were absolutely sumptuous.

My Uncle George would visit and stay for a week at a time. One of the sons, Richard, was his age and they were great friends. Once they were hunting groundhogs and cornered one in a log pile. Richard peaked in one end of the pile and George the other. George saw the groundhog and shot. The bullet ricocheted off a log and hit Richard in the chest. We had driven over that day to bring George home. I remember seeing Richard in a car as they were taking him to the hospital in Charlottesville. He looked mighty bad but lived. Years later he was shot again in the chest while serving with the Army in the

European Theater during WW II. When they x-rayed him they saw two bullets but only one entrance hole. They couldn't understand it until Richard was able to tell them his story of having been shot before. It seemed that the bullet of his first wounding was so close to his heart that the doctor's didn't remove it.

When I got back to Durbin, I learned the value of a gruesome, factual story as gossip. I went all over Durbin telling everyone that George shot Richard. I was invited into the homes of people who wouldn't even acknowledge my presence before. I had never been so popular.

Uncle Buzz and Aunt Annie had two other sons, Ray and Roscoe. Ray was a businessman and had obtained the contract for delivering the United States mail. Roscoe helped him in this endeavor. Roscoe was a larger than life individual. He had a deep, resonant voice and an outgoing personality. One of the routes was to Bartow, West Virginia. At the end of one of George's stay, Roscoe was driving him home. The vehicle they were riding in had no top. When they got to the top of Allegheny, a hawk flew across the road. Roscoe pulled out a pistol and started shooting at it and ran off the road and down over the mountain. Fortunately no one was hurt and George eventually got home.

We would also visit Uncle Tom, another of Granddad's brothers, especially in the spring when the maple sap was rising. He had a sugar camp in which he made maple syrup. A sugar camp is a building in which a long, brick, fire trough was constructed. Large, metal pans called evaporators were placed on top. In front of the trough was a door where one could feed firewood. Uncle Tom would let me ride on the sleigh with him as a horse pulled it from tree to tree and he collected the sap. At a ratio of forty gallons of sap to one gallon of syrup, he had to tap a lot of trees in order to make any kind of profit. It took a lot of time to collect it all and I didn't mind one bit for to me it was fun. He poured the sap into a large barrel that he carried on the sleigh. When he got back to the sugar camp, he would pour the sap into the evaporators. He knew exactly how long to boil the sap until it became maple syrup. If allowed to boil, too long it would turn into sugar. Sometimes, people would deliberately take sap or syrup home and boil it until it did become sugar and then by some process would mold it into sugar cakes. This was a favorite of my Grandfather. As the cooking progressed, drops would be placed into cold water as a test to see how much longer to cook it. These balls of presugared maple syrup were called clunkers and were usually given to impatient children to eat.

Often, Granddad would go to the store and buy ham, bacon, and eggs and throw them directly into the evaporators to cook. We then ate this on good homemade bread. More than likely it was salt-risin' which was the bread of choice. Did anything taste better? I learned later that when the maple sap started to thicken it would begin to froth. This reduced the efficiency of evaporation and slowed things down. Operators would from time to time add oil to the evaporators to prevent this from happening. Granddad putting bacon and ham into the evaporators had the same results.

Once I spent a week with Uncle Tom. I was in high school at the time. Before I left, my Mother told me to listen to Uncle Tom and to do anything that he asked. I swore



to do so. The next morning he said, "Ben do you like waffles?" I said, "Uncle Tom, I love waffles." He fed me waffles three times a day for the rest of the week. To this day, I cannot eat a waffle. It was during the opening week of trout season. Virginia had a really super trout-stocking program. The little stream, a branch of the Potomac, was always full of trout on opening day. My Grandfather drove me over after school and didn't leave until late. He and Uncle Tom told story after story and to say I was entertained would be an understatement. Many of those stories are in this paper.

The next morning I got up early and started out. It was cool and I wore an Army surplus parka over my clothes and put on my old boy scout campaign hat. I was fishing with flies and it was not the time of year to do this nor were the trout accustomed to eating natural food having been raised in a hatchery. I wasn't catching any fish but I was having a great old time. I climbed over a gate across the stream and when I was on top I saw what looked like a lot of people dancing down stream. I didn't pay much attention and when I got to where this took place, Richard Hull was waiting for me. He said, "Ben are you trying to get yourself killed?" I asked what he meant. He said, "Look how you're dressed. These guys thought you were a game warden and it scared the heck out of them." The dancing I saw were the people throwing their fish away into a laurel bush and running away. The fish were illegal for two reasons; one being those individual catches exceeded the limit and by the manner in which they were caught. Richard showed me how. They were snared. To do this, one tied piano wire into a noose and attached it to the end of a long, stout stick. They would then sneak up to the stream and if they saw a trout would slip the noose over its head and jerk. The noose would tighten and they would yank the fish out of the water. Judging from the number of trout collected by Richard, they were very skilled at this. He took the fish home and I went back to Uncle Tom's to more waffles.

Later, Uncle Tom told me of a secret place. He had found it at a stile he crossed in collecting his milk cow. There was a deep hole there and he had seen trout in it. He helped me dig some worms and I put my flies in my pocket and baited a hook with the worms. On my first cast, a big trout hit that worm and soon I had him on the bank. I made another cast and soon had a second trout alongside the first. I didn't catch any more but went home with two beautiful fish.

### The Farm:

As I had mentioned earlier, Granddad had a farm on the Old Staunton-Parkersburg Pike. It was an old farm that had a house, several outbuildings, and a large barn. He really enjoyed the farm. It was place he could go to in order to get away from the pressure of work. People would call him all times of the day and night seven days a week. Having the farm sure beat the old method of when someone knocked on the front door of his house; he would sometimes hide in the dining room and have me tell the caller that he was on a case. Then if he recognized the person, he would come out and

welcome them with much gusto. Those people would then look at me with pure hate in their eyes.

As my Grandfather aged, my Mother was even more protective of him and apprehensive about his whereabouts. Once, we were having a snowstorm and Granddad wasn't home. The evening grew later and later. Finally, Mom said to me that we were going out and see if we could find Granddad. We drove to the farm and the snow was so deep that we couldn't drive up the road to the house. So we got out and walked up the hill to it. We got there and the door was unlocked. We went up stairs and there was Granddad in bed reading. He had the old King Heater red with a wood fire and the place was really snug. Mom was satisfied that he was o.k. and we went back to the car. I remember that Mom slid down the hill on her backside.

Granddad knew farm work. He kept sheep and during shearing time, I was allowed to help. My job was to help throw the sheep onto a platform for shearing, they are much lighter than they look, and then turn the crank of the cutter machine. It took skill to do the shearing and I admired those who could do it. The wool was then stuffed in burlap bags for later sale. We wore our boots when we stuffed the bags and would pack the wool with our booted feet. The lanolin of the wool would coat our boots and this waterproofed them and made them pliable.

Making hay was an important job in the summer time. The hay was either cut by hand using a scythe or by a mowing machine. Granddad was the best with a scythe of anyone I have ever seen. Individuals using specialize hay rakes would rake the cut grass into windrows and allow it to dry. Once dried, the hay was raked into piles called shocks. It would then be put into the loft of the barn or stacked. The manner in which the shocks were moved was to place a chain around the shock and attach it to a special harness on the horse. Someone rode and guided the horse to where the shock was to go and then pick up others. Stacking hay was also a skill that not everyone knew and individuals were hired just to do this. Today hay is baled and stacking is probably a lost skill.

One of the worse moments of my life happened at haymaking. I was riding the horse collecting and pulling the shocks when Granddad criticized me for doing something wrong. I don't remember the exact exchange but what I do remember was that I was feeling my oats and smart-mouthed him in front of everyone. I immediately regretted this and knew I had done wrong. A few minutes later he yelled to me to, "come here!" Feeling bad, I jumped off the horse and ran toward him. He thought I was being defiant by not riding the horse over to him. He told me get off the farm and go home. Well I lost my temper and walked off the farm in a huff. I was waking down the Old Pike when his car pulled up behind me. He jumped out of the car and said, "Get in!" Well he had a stick in his hand and started hitting me on the back with it. I started running around the car with him right with me. At every step, he would hit me with that stick and pieces of it would fly off. I tried to get into the passenger side of the car, anything to get away from that stick, but my friend Donny Spenser was in the car and when he saw Granddad come

at me with that stick, he locked the door. I'll never forget the look of terror on Donny's face as he tried to get it unlocked so I could get in. After what seemed an eternity, he got the door open and I was able to escape that stick. Once in the car I started crying. I was crushed, first that my Granddad would hit me and second that I knew that I deserved it. He drove us home and I went into the house and back into my room. I was crying and when my Mother asked what happened, Donny yelled, "Doc hit him with a club." Well no tiger was more protective of its cubs than my Mother was with my sister and me. Down the road she went and confronted my Grandfather wanting to know just what happened. Granddad laughed and said that he had hit me with a Polk stock and that it didn't hurt me. He was right; I wasn't hurt, as Polk stock isn't much in the way of a stick and when dry is easily broken. This is why when he hit me bits of the stick flew apart. It didn't hurt me but it sure did have a great dramatic effect, which added to Donnie's terror. I finally cried myself out and my Mother sent me downtown on some errand. To get there, I had to walk past Granddad's and there he was sitting on the porch. He yelled at me to come up there. I ignored him. Then he yelled again and I relented a little. I was feeling pretty guilty. He called to me again and I went up and sat beside him on the glider. He put his arm around me and all was well with the world again. But I never forgot the lesson and I never smart-mouthed my Grandfather again.

### War Years:

War came to Durbin in a very dramatic way. A pilot on a training flight crashed his plane up John's Run. As people would say, "It is a God forsaken place." Some people said that they both heard and saw the plane and knew that it was in trouble. When it crashed, it caught fire and burned. Granddad was called, as law enforcement wanted a doctor on scene while they investigated. When he arrived, the pilot was still in the plane and he helped remove the body. This was quite exciting to me and the next time I saw Granddad I asked him about it. I could see that he was very distressed about what had happened and I never bothered him about it again. However, it seemed everyone in the country who could ride or walk went to see the site. They carried away anything that could get their hands on as souvenirs. The next day at school, my friend Bill Mullenax had part of the pilot's gas mask. When the Army arrived, they put guards around the plane and conducted their investigation. Later they brought in trucks and carried away what was left.

The war hit Durbin very hard. I suppose that it was because the town was small and everyone knew everyone else. There was great apprehension about all that served. Uncle George was drafted and this caused Granddad much worry. This was brought home vividly when word came that Billy Watts was killed. He was George's age. Worrier that she was, Mom had me to go with Granddad whenever possible. He was getting old, was overworked, and now had this on his mind. This was no chore for me, as I loved going with him.



Late one evening, my Mother hadn't seen my Grandfather's car and was worried. My Grandmother was away on WCTU business and he was alone. She told me to go to his house and wait for him. As I said, it was late and I was really afraid of staying in that house alone. At night it creaked and moaned and I was sure someone or something was coming to get me. I didn't go upstairs to go to bed but instead laid down on the couch. This didn't help much because someone was supposed to have died on that couch. Exhausted, I finally went to sleep. I must have slept for some time when I felt a hand on my shoulder. They say that I jumped completely over the sofa. Fortunately, it was my Mother who came to check if all was o.k. My Granddad still wasn't home. Upon checking, we found where he had returned and had eaten a piece of pie and then left on another call. He had been very quiet so as not to waken me.

Another time it was just he and I the house, I was awakened by a pounding on the door. It was not unusual for people to call him out at night. But this time it was some lady from Frank and a companion. Her name was Lilly and she was drunk. She said that she wanted to come and visit her friend Doc Hull and get a drink. Granddad told her in no uncertain terms to get the hell out of the house. She said that she was coming up the stairs to his room and visit. Granddad told her that if she came up the stairs he was going to kick her back down. So up the stairs she came saying, "Now Doctor Hull, you wouldn't do that to old Miss Lilly would you?" She almost made it to the top when I heard my Granddad give a shout, she gave a scream, and then there was a sound of a body falling down the stairs. All was quiet for a moment, then I heard the front door slowly close. The next thing I heard was the door to Granddad's room close. I went back to sleep.

The first thing he did was to teach me to drive. He had a Chevrolet coupe'. It was not in very good shape. It had the gearshift on the steering wheel. One could tell his mood by the way he raced its engine. He would start the car, race the engine, and then let out the clutch, and drive away about five to ten miles per hour. Burned out clutches were the norm. Being tall, he drove the seat as far back as it would go. It was broken and could not be adjusted. When I got behind the steering wheel to drive, I had a hard time sitting near it and seeing out the window. Also, my feet barely reached the pedals. Sometimes, I sat on his medicine bag to help. But learn to drive I did. As I got better and gained confidence, I also became bolder and listened less and less to Granddad. A favorite drive was to the top of Allegheny. It was a steep, curvy road and not where you wanted to teach anyone driving skills. I remember we would drive at the breakneck speed of twenty-five miles an hour. We would drive to a place on the mountain where there was a spring. People would come here to get water for their use at home. There was a wide place in the woods where they turned their cars and wagons around. I pulled the car into the turnoff in order to turn around. When I put the car in reverse and started backing up, Granddad started yelling, "Turn the wheel, turn the wheel!" Well I turned the wheel and the more I turned it the more Granddad shouted. It seemed that I was turning the wheel the wrong way and we ended up in the ditch. This was no ordinary ditch but one so deep that the rear of the car rested on the edge of the ditch and the wheel was off the ground. Amid much cussing and yelling, Granddad couldn't get the car out no matter

what he did. I don't think I have mentioned this before, but Granddad had cussing developed into an art form. Being a brilliant orator, he could go on for what seems forever and never repeat himself. Turning the air blue to describe this was to do it a disservice. He told me, among other things, that he couldn't understand how this happened especially since he was giving me directions and that I wasn't born that dumb. It was obvious that we couldn't get the car out no matter how much Granddad raced the motor and I pushed. Something had to be done so I started walking up the road to where I thought someone lived who might help. Also I wanted to get as far away from Granddad as possible. I eventually came to a house and knocked on the door. A man answered and I explained who I was and our predicament. Mountain people to say the least are very suspicious of everyone. But my red eyes from crying and obvious distraught must have convinced him that my story had merit. He said, "So Doc Hull is stuck in a ditch. May be I can help. Come with me." We went to the side of his house, which was built on a very steep slope, and there was his car. It was up on blocks. The man motioned for me to get in which I did and then he told me to rock back and forth and he began doing this. What he was doing became crystal clear and I almost froze with fear. The idea was to rock the car off the blocks and as it started its forward motion to release the clutch and the motor would catch. At least this was the plan. I started rocking back and forth along with the man and the car started to move. When it came off the blocks it was like the beginning of a horse race. Down that mountainside we went. We bounced along gaining speed at every foot. Just before we got to a stand of trees, he threw out the clutch, the car started, and he brought it to a halt. This was not an experience that I ever wanted to repeat. I was soaked with sweat. This guy had to have the heart of a lion if this is how he started his car every time he wanted to go somewhere. I suspect that he walked most places rather than drove. We got the car back on the road and to where we were stuck. Granddad was waiting. The man had a chain, fixed it to our car, and pulled us out. Granddad asked the man how much he owed him and the man said, "Take it off the bill Doc." Getting the man and getting the car out provided only a short respite in my chastisement which continued to Durbin. I think my crying did soften Granddad's heart some and he allowed that the man had never paid anything on his bill before and never would.

Granddad would drive a long way to service his patients. Once I drove him to Circleville a distance of about forty miles plus round trip. He had to see a woman who was ill. The area where she lived was called Dry Run. It is one of poorest areas in West Virginia. My next door neighbor, Elbert Whanger who is one hundred years old, would tell me, "Those people at Dry Run are mean. I hate to drive by there. They'll shoot at you." We got there and found the woman in her home and in bed. The home was the kind that fit on the back of a logging truck. When the owners got to where they were working, they would put the home off and live in it. The old woman and was living with her daughter, son-in-law and their children. I never figured out where they all slept. However, the home was clean. The only decoration in the place was a picture of Roy Rogers taken from the back of a comic book. People gathered both inside and outside the

house. When Granddad came to visit, it always created a stir. The patient was in the only bed. Granddad examined her and said that she had double pneumonia. He said, "Granny, you belong in a hospital is there any way you can go?" They both knew that if she didn't go she would die and you could tell that they both knew that due to her circumstances, she couldn't go. The next time we drove past that place, the house was gone.

Another time Granddad was called out on a baby case at the Pocahontas/Pendelton County line. A distance of over twenty miles. When we got there, the husband met us at the gate and told Granddad that he got worried if he would make it and had called Dr. Swecker who had just arrived. To say the least, Granddad was a bit put off. He held a rather spirited discussion with the man the gist of which was that he should be compensated for having made the trip. The man assured him that he would pay. During all of this, Granddad had me back up to turn around. I couldn't see too well as it was night and backed the car right into the gate. The bumper hooked one of its rungs. It was a big gate, the kind that swung across a road. Amid much yelling, I was told to pull ahead and when I did, I pulled the gate off its hinges. It took some doing to get it loose. I thought I was in for it now. Granddad got into the car and surprisingly didn't say a word. As we were driving home, he said, "Serves him right. I won't get a dime anyway." On these trips I would drive and he would sleep. Coming home, there was a big rock across the middle stripe in the road and I thought I would straddle it. I ran right over the rock. Granddad woke up and said, "Ben; you're the only person I know who would drive clear on the other side of the road just to hit a rock."

### **Hunting:**

Hunting has always been a part of my life. I remember watching my Granddad and Uncle skin squirrels. I would then take the skins a stretch them on form boards that I had made. I kept them around the house and my Mother was tolerant of this. When my Uncle went into the Army, then my Grandfather would take me with him. I would carry a single shot 22. At that time, I wasn't a very good shot but being out with Granddad was the important thing. I learned to shoot at Camp Minnehaha where they had a full time rifle instructor. Once we were walking along a path when my Grandfather raised his shotgun quickly and shot. A ruffed grouse came crashing through the trees. I hadn't even seen it.

Granddad had hunted all of his life and was equally adept with shotgun or rifle. Dabney Kisner said Granddad was on of the best shots he had ever seen. This is high praise as Dabney's reputation as a hunter is well established among the hunting clan. Granddad had the deer heads to prove his prowess in this type of hunting. They were the heads of giant deer and they were hung in his office. Once he killed, "The bear of the mountain." It was a huge deer and he had the entire deer mounted. One day in the spring a truck pulls up in front of our house with Granddad behind it. In the truck was the deer and Granddad proudly announced that he had brought it to me so we could have it in our



house. I was thrilled and Granddad was proud, but not my Mother. Our house was small and there was no room for it. I said it could be put in my bedroom but this was the smallest room in the house and just wouldn't work. So a sadder Granddad left looking for a place for his deer. Well, Grandmother wouldn't let him keep it at his house either. Finally Randolph Bledsoe let Granddad put it in the show room of his Chrysler dealership. There it remained for years. Randolph eventually got out of the automobile business and opened a motel. I don't know what happened to the mounted deer.

We hunted deer whenever we could especially when George came home from College. Our favorite place to hunt was Red Oak Knob in Virginia. It was on the Lazy K Bar Ranch that was owned by the Kendrick family. Mr. Kendrick was from New Mexico and when he came east he bought and named the ranch. He also raised goats, which was very novel to the people as no one had done this before. Red Oak Knob had been in Granddad's family at one time. It was quite a distance from the main road and we could hunt to our hearts content.

Sometimes we would hunt by ourselves, just Granddad and me, and at other times we have a variety of people with us. I liked going on the big hunts. We would meet early at Aunt Ann's and Uncle Buzz's to eat breakfast and get organized. I don't think it was unusual for upwards of forty men or more to be fed. They would feed us in shifts and the wives and daughters would cook. I have never seen such food before. There was always mounds of biscuits and cakes which we ate with maple syrup, heaps of eggs, and a variety of meats that would make any cardiologist blanch. We would eat our fill and then go hunting. Red Oak Knob was our destination. The hunt would follow the strategy of "drive and stand." Some men would be stationed at certain locations on the edge of a wood and the others would walk, "drive", through the woods pushing the deer and whatever else was there out to the standers who could shoot them. As the drivers moved through the woods they would bark like dogs. The beginning of deer season was also the beginning of small game season. Most of the drivers would carry shotguns to shoot squirrels, grouse, and turkey. After the morning hunt, we would usually gather at the water hole on top of the mountain and eat again. The older men would have a drink or two and then someone would say, "Tell me, how does yourii gun shoot?" and the owner of the gun would say, "Why not give'er a try." Someone else would put up a target and we'd shoot mark. The best shot was Dr. Swecker. He always carried a saddle carbine that was smaller than the lever action rifles most carried. He could really shoot with that gun and anyone else who tried could not hit anything with it.

We would go on these big organized hunts only once a year. Other times, in season or out, only three or four of us went. Usually it was Granddad, Mr. Hudson who was Granddad's best friend, Ernest Simmons and I. Ernest helped Granddad at the farm and would do anything Granddad asked of him. On these hunts, Ernest would drive and I would sit in the back of the car with Mr. Hudson. The hunting followed a similar pattern of the big hunts. We would hunt in the morning and then eat in the afternoon. As we ate we would listen to football games on the radio. There was always some liquor and

Ernest never had it so good. At times he would drink a little too much, would turn the radio on to some music, and dance on the fender of the car. We had some high old times.

Ernest had two sons who were severely retarded. They grew to be very large and strong. They couldn't talk but would yell at the top of their voices. Ernest kept them at home and never let them out of the yard. If I ever doubted the courage of my Uncle George, what happened one-day at Ernest's removed it. Granddad wanted us to deliver some message to Ernest. I suppose it had something to do with the farm. George said that he would tell Ernest. He knocked on the door and suddenly the boys came around the house on a dead run. They ran right at George and got to within a foot of him and then screamed at the top of their voices. He never moved a muscle but looked them right in the eye. They stopped, looked confused, and backed away. The boys got so large and strong that Ernest couldn't control them. Once we were eating lunch when Ernest burst into the house shouting, "come quick Doc. One of the boys kicked Grace in the ass and I think he broke her leg." Eventually they had to put them in a home where they both died. One had an appendectomy and kept pulling out his stitches. The incision would not heal and he died. The other, it was said, died of loneliness.

When George came home from college we usually went on a hunt. Ernest would drive us to Red Oak Knob. Once as we drove to where we parked, we saw a big buck run into a laurel thicket. Granddad had George and I to do a drive around the thicket to chase the deer out while he, Mr. Hudson, and Ernest took a stand. As I was finishing the drive, I heard loud voices. As I got closer I realized it was Granddad yelling, "Come out from behind that tree you damn hound and come up here to me. You can't hunt on this property, as it's private land." I hurried to the sounds and when I broke into the open, there was a man with a rifle hiding behind a dead chestnut tree. He and I looked at each other and his look was that of a trapped animal. I very carefully put my rifle on the ground and spread my hands to show him that he had nothing to fear from me. My Granddad said, "If you don't come here I'm going to shoot through the tree." I believed him and the man seeing me as well must have believed him. Also about this time, George walked out of the woods and the man gave up and walked to where my Granddad and the others were. I followed behind. When he got to where Granddad was, Granddad recognized the man. Granddad's entire attitude changed. He started pounding the man on his back and telling him how glad he was to see him. He gave him a cigar and a few gulps of whiskey. The man took everything offered. Another man came out of the woods and was introduced as the man's son-in-law. He had been hiding. He was treated the same way with whiskey and cigars. Granddad organized another hunt with the two new members of our group. As we were walking to where we were going, I looked at the man and had never seen such hatred in my life. This was one angry man. We went on our drive

and when we came out of the woods, the man and his son-in-law were not with us. Some how they communicated and hid during the hunt. I was glad to see them gone. I thought we were very lucky as this could have turned into an ugly incident. Mountain people are hard to predict.

The hunt that I mostly remember was the one with my Cousin Roscoe and Granddad. Roscoe was living at the farm at that time and he and Granddad set up the hunt. We drove to Red Oak Knob and as soon as we got out of the car we heard shooting. Roscoe said that Dr. Swecker and others were hunting on a neighboring property and we could meet them. I thought that Granddad and Roscoe had planned to join up with them. We walked off the mountain in the direction of the shooting and eventually did join up with the others. I looked around and Granddad wasn't there. We waited but he didn't come. I thought he must have stopped at a fence we crossed earlier and would wait until Roscoe and I came back. Well, we visited with the group awhile and then went back to look for Granddad. He wasn't at the fence. We walked up the mountain and didn't meet him and when we got to where we had parked the car, it was gone. Granddad had left us. Well what to do? The only thing was to walk to the ranch house and ask Mrs. Kendrick to drive us to Allegheny line where Roscoe had parked his car. But first, we sat down to figure this out and Roscoe pulled out a pint of whisky. He started drinking this and badmouthing Granddad. As we walked off that mountain he finished that bottle and never shut up. When we got the ranch house, he was pretty well soused. Mrs. Kendrick responded to my knock and listened with sympathy to my tale and said that she would drive us to where Roscoe's car was parked. When we got there, Roscoe staggered to his car, reached under his seat, and pulled out another bottle of whisky and said to Mrs. Kendrick, "Have a drink." Much to my surprise she did, drank it right out of the bottle like a man. Roscoe drove me home and didn't even get out of the car, as he was very angry. I also knew that he was not stupid and would never say or do anything to my Granddad. I couldn't wait to see Granddad to find out what happened. When I did see him, he was very indignant. He said that we had run off and left him alone. He said that he whistled and whistled but we didn't respond. I asked him to show me how he did this. He pulled an empty rifle shell out of his pocket and blew across it. On a good blow, one could not hear this sound more than five feet. This was the whistling he was doing. He never admitted he was wrong at leaving us and never apologized to me. Also, I never left my Granddad on a hunt again.

Once he took me on a hunt on Cheat Mountain. We hunted on an abandoned farm. Granddad walked one way and I another. While walking along, I saw two deer feeding on apples in an old orchard. I put them both down. When Granddad heard me shooting he came to meet me. Seeing the deer, he said we needed to get some help so we drove back to Durbin and on to Frank and got Mozzel Thompson. Mozzel had helped Granddad on several occasions both at home and on the farm. He got in his car and we drove back up on Cheat. Mozzel dressed out the deer. He had some big empty bags and put the deer meat in them. He took one deer with him and we took the other. He drove home and we did the same. Did we have difficulty of trying to get rid of that illegal deer meat? We went to my house and my Mother kicked us out. She got really angry about our hunting out of season and said if anyone knew, we could end up in jail and my Dad could lose his job. So much for the good feeling I had about killing the deer. Granddad knew better than to even try his home. We went to Mr. Hudson's. Granddad called



through his door to identify himself and Mr. Hudson said come in. It was late at night and he and his wife were in bed. I remember standing in their bedroom with a huge bag of bleeding deer meat in each hand. Mr. Hudson was polite but said the same thing as my Mother. So what to do? Here we were two outlaw hunters with the evidence in our hands. We did what we should have done in the first place. We drove to Mozzel's. He took the meat and we went home. No one ever mentioned this incident again.

### **Fishing:**

I have never seen anyone work a fly rod as well as my Granddad. It was a thing of beauty to watch him fish. He fished only wet flies. He would tie a cast of two or three on his leader. He always caught fish. Once we were fishing at Bocker on the West Fork of the Greenbrier and he caught two huge fish at the same time. No one ever taught me to fly fish, but I would watch him and Mr. Hudson and would try to imitate them. Mr. Hudson was also a master fly fisherman. No one had better role models. I used to save my money and buy a dozen dry flies each spring from L. L. Bean. Those flies were perfectly tied. They were beautiful. I still enjoy fly-fishing and now tie my own flies.

Quinton Hull, Granddad's nephew, came to visit from Medical School and to fish. Granddad couldn't get away so he had me take Quinton fishing. At that time, I didn't have a fly rod nor reel so he gave me his. We drove up the West Fork of the Greenbrier and started fishing at Burner Dam. I hooked onto a big fish and was fighting it when it threw the hook. I lost my temper and threw the rod down and as luck would have it, the reel hit a rock smashing it. There I was, what would I tell Granddad? I wasn't old enough to drive so as Quinton was driving us home I concocted the story that I had tripped and as I fell the reel hit a rock. Well I told this to Granddad and to say the least, he was not a happy person. He said, "Tripped hell, to do that damage you had to run over it with the car." Quinton knew I had lied to my Grandfather. I don't think he ever forgave me. I know I never forgave myself and still feel guilty about having done it.

### **Mooseheart:**

My Dad was offered the position of Superintendent of Mooseheart in Illinois. Mooseheart was the institution that the Moose Association established for orphans of its members and a place where a single parent could come with their child or children. It was a beautiful place and ideal for my Father's talents of meeting people and working with children. He was to work for a year learning the position before taking over when the current Superintendent retired. I remember how hard it was for Granddad to accept that we were moving away from Durbin. Dad, Mom, and Mary Catheryne moved in the late spring when school was over in Durbin. I was in summer school at the University and when it was over, Granddad, Grandmother, and George picked me up and we drove to Mooseheart. It took us two days driving. On the first day, Granddad complained so

much that it got on everyone's nerves. That night when we stopped, we were deciding who would go to what rooms in the hotel, Granddad said, "I'll sleep with Ben." George and Grandmother said, "O.K." and ran off like the cowards they were. I didn't get any sleep at all as I had to get him cigars, newspapers, water, matches, etc. He read all night and kept the light on. I really didn't mind this, as it was always the same when I stayed with him. Besides I could sleep as we drove the next day. We arrived at Mooseheart without further incident. They stayed overnight and left the next day. We wanted them to stay longer but they wouldn't

At that year's Christmas, Granddad and Grandmother visited my family in Mooseheart again. I came in from college. The place was beautiful and my Father was already well accepted. I went with him on his rounds whenever I could. But I could tell that he was under stress. I was watching TV when he came home early and said that he had a pain in his chest. Granddad had him go upstairs to bed and examined him. I asked my Granddad what he thought and he said that my Dad had a small heart attack. I asked if we shouldn't get him to the hospital and he said that we'd wait for a bit. Mom had to go to the store and get some groceries for dinner and asked if it was o.k. to leave. Granddad said yes that my Dad was resting well and it would be all right if we went to the store. We no sooner got to the store than the phone rang and the man said it was for us. It was Grandmother and she said to come right home. When we got there my Father was dead from a coronary. My poor Mother went to pieces. My Grandmother was taking care of her. Granddad was with my Father. I suddenly realized that there was my sister. She looked so lonely and confused as to what was happening. I put my arms around her and never felt so helpless or impotent. What could I do to help her? I had no skills, no money, nothing. Grandmother came and took her away. That night I sat up with Granddad. The next day my Grandmother Poscover, Uncle Harry, and Uncle Eddie, Dad's brothers, arrived. It was late and we sat up and slept in chairs that night. Grandmother took over and organized everything. There was a funeral for my Dad at Mooseheart. We then caught the train and returned to Durbin. When we arrived, it seemed that the entire town turned out. The first person to meet us was Harry Widney. I'll never forget his kindness to my Mother and the rest of the family. He told Mom that all arrangements were taken care of. They showed my Dad in Granddad's house and then he was buried in the new

cemetery in Arbovale. Several men bought plots next to ours as a show of honor to my Dad. The Widneys and Chick Feather were two who did this. My Grandmother, wonderful woman that she was, opened her home to us. I went back to college, Mom went back to her teaching job in Illinois, and Mary Catheryne stayed with Granddad and Grandmother. She was nine years old. I have never known such hurt. It is still there.

My Mother completed the school year. I don't know how she did it. It was the greatest display of courage I have ever seen. Coming home on holidays was important. I really needed my family. Grandmother and Granddad did everything for us.

My Grandmother gave Mary Catheryne music lessons. One Christmas we had a

recital. Granddad insisted that we wear our best. This included coats and ties for George and me. Grandmother wore an evening gown, as did Mary Catheryne. They found one for May as well. I remember it was green in color. May found a sash and tied it around her head. With her mahogany colored skin, she was a striking figure. Grandmother had printed a program for each of us. Mary Catheryne or Grandmother would announce the selections. It was one of the best family experiences of my life. In going through old papers in our house in Durbin, we found Mary Catheryne's music program. Ruth sent it to her. She framed it and put it in the den of her home.

I graduated from college and went into the Army. I had a commission through R.O.T.C. Grandmother always told me that my Grandfather always referred to me as the Lieutenant. I spent a year in the States. My Mother had gotten a job teaching with Baltimore County Public Schools and I visited there at Christmas. Grandmother had brought Granddad to Baltimore and they lived near my Mother and Sister.

The next time I saw them was in New York City. I had been assigned as commander of an equipment train. Our unit was traveling to Germany. It was a missile outfit and we had to take our specialized equipment with us. We traveled by train to New York City and then by ship to Germany. My Mother, Sister, Grandmother, and Granddad came to New York to see me and we all stayed with my Uncle George who was practicing medicine there at the time. This was the last time I saw my Grandfather alive. I was on a field exercise in Germany when I received a telegram telling me that he had died. It was from Grandmother. She said that she would hold the funeral for me if I could make it home. I couldn't and drove to the nearest Red Cross office to send a return telegram to that effect. I remember that later I spent some time by myself. I was sad but couldn't be too sad as the last time I saw Granddad, he was failing badly. Also, I could not think of anyone who had a more fulfilling life. His life was chucked full of adventure, accomplishment, and love. When I was home again, my Grandmother told me about his death. She always checked on him at bedtime and then again the first thing in the morning. When she checked on the final morning, he was gone. He had died peaceably in his sleep. I sure did love that Man.

### Others Stories:

It is not unusual for people to stop me and tell me a Doc Hull story. Following are a few of the one's I remember:

Dick Hiner: No family was closer to us than the Hiner family. There were ten children in the family, four boys and six girls. The older girls were friends of my Mother. My Granddad would often get one of them to stay with her when he was out of town or going to be late on a call. The younger ones were friends of my Uncle George and Dick is our best friend today in Durbin. I don't know why but the family has always been friendly to me. When I was young, Dick who was a football star would bring me things. Once he



brought me an old leather football helmet which I wore all the time. Another time he brought me an old, wool football jersey that was full of holes and itched like the devil but I wore it until my Mother refused to wash it anymore. In Durbin there is Hiner Hollow, Hiner Hill, and Hiner Town. Mr. Hiner was an undertaker and owned the Hiner Hardware store. My earliest recollection of him was when I sledded on Hiner Hill and if he saw me

he would call me, "Bennie from the Woods". Once my Uncle George got a pair of skis for Christmas. He went to Hiner Hollow and skied down one of its slopes. Dick had no skis and decided that he'd make his own. He did so using barrel staves. Down the hill he came, fell, and broke his leg. They carried him home and Granddad set his leg on the dining room table. Dick and Granddad would have long conversations on just about every subject. He served in the Army during both the Second World War and Korea. One day when he was home after WW II he came over to see Granddad. He and Grandmother were going someplace and asked Dick to come along. As they rode along, they discussed life in the Army. Grandmother asked Dick what was the most common ailment that soldiers suffered in the Pacific. Dick answered; "The GI's" and Grandmother asked what that was. Poor Dick was caught totally off guard and was trying to think of some nice word to tell Grandmother but couldn't. She persisted with her question and finally Dick said in exasperation, "The shits." Granddad said, "By golly Dick, that's telling it like it is."

Pete Hanlon: Pete was the Forest Ranger in the National Forest when I was growing up. He was a wonderful man. I remember being very grown up and every time I saw him I'd ask, "How's the mast this year?" This was a hunter's question because if there was lots of mast (acorns, beechnuts, etc.) then there would be lots of squirrels, turkeys, and grouse. He would very patiently answer. The last time I saw Pete he had come in for a reunion of the CCCs. He was guest speaker. The Civilian Conservation Corps did most of their work in the National Forest. Granddad was the medical doctor for the CCCs in our area. Sometimes I would go with him and he would always meet the officer in charge, Lieutenant Dewes. Lt. Dewes was an impressive figure. He dressed in riding pants, riding

boots, and a Sam Bowie Belt over his dress uniform coat. I had a picture that was of Granddad and Lt. Dewes and showed it to Pete. He wanted a copy to place in the CCC museum at Watoga State Park and I sent him one. He laughed and told me that once Granddad said to him, "Hanlon, if you stay around here much longer as Ranger, there won't be enough timber left to build an outhouse."

Dayton Burner: When Dayton was a young man, Granddad would have him go to the State store from time to time and get Granddad a bottle of liquor. Once Granddad saw him and said, "Bill come into my office." What my Granddad wanted him to do was to run this errand. He gave Dayton some money and Dayton did it. He hid the bottle in his

coat and came back to the office. Dayton said the office was full of people but when Granddad saw him, he said, "Bill come on in here." Some time later Dayton received a bill from my Grandmother, who acted as my Granddad's secretary, for an office visit.

Fred Pugh: Fred is now near ninety years old. He is quite a hunter and fisherman. Once he was walking by Granddad's office when Granddad saw him. Granddad said, "Fred, do you know what that damn Forest Service is trying to do?" Fred said he didn't and Granddad said, "They want to plant oak trees all up and down the rivers. When is the last time that you saw a trout eat an acorn?"

The Moore Twins: At a reunion of the now extinct Greenbank High School, two young men approached me and asked if I knew who they were. I didn't. They said that when they were to be born, their Father got excited and called both of the town doctors, Dr. Burner and Granddad. They both showed up at the same time and when the Mother delivered, it was twin boys. She named one George and the other Eugene after the names of the doctors.

The Store Lady at Spruce Knob: Once Ruth, the kids, and I were camping at Spruce Knob, which is about 25 miles from Durbin. It is the highest point in West Virginia and is really isolated. We needed some groceries and had noticed a small store on the road into where we were going to camp. We went there to get our supplies and were waited on by a friendly, elderly lady. I remember thinking she must have been beautiful in her younger days. I asked her if she would accept a traveler's check for payment. I don't think she knew what a traveler's check was and said that they accepted no checks. We continued to talk and during the conversation it came out that I was the Grandson of Doc Hull. She said, "Doc Hull, why I used to midwife for him all through these mountains." She cashed the check.

Bruce Bosley: The Town of Durbin provided Granddad with a parking place in front of his office. Woe be to the individual who parked in his private place. If one did, he would seek out the offender and give them a severe tongue lashing at the top of his voice. They'd never forget nor would they ever park in his place again. One individual was heard to say after one such incident, that this was the first time in his life that he had ever been called a "damn hound." During another occasion, the offending person had the effrontery to talk back to Granddad. Hearing the commotion, Bruce went to investigate and to see if he could help Granddad. Granddad saw him and said, "Go ahead and hit him Bruce. I'll pay your fine." I should mention that Bruce went on to have a very successful career in professional football becoming an All Pro Lineman.

Monna Hiner: This past summer, Monna told me that when she was a little girl her Mother sent her to town on a errand. To get there, she had to walk down a series of steps that ran from the top of the hill where Granddad's house was to downtown. As she was walking down the steps she met Pruny Bill Simmons. Pruny Bill was more than likely drunk and was staggering. Anyway, when Monna saw him she started screaming. She said that she didn't know what got into her, as Mr. Simmons did absolutely nothing to her. She said that Granddad came off the porch like a shot and grabbed Pruny Bill and started shaking him saying, "What did you do to her?" Pruny Bill was totally confused and feared for his life so he said nothing. Granddad took Monna in his arms and carried her home after he admonished Pruny Bill never to come near her again. Later when Pruny Bill regained his composure, he went to Monna's Mother and explained that he would never harm Monna and didn't know what happened. She forgave him. Monna was named after my grandmother who spelled her name with only one "n", Mona.

Jessie Brown Beard: Jessie is a retired history teacher. She inherited a large farm from her Father, Brown Beard. It has a house on it called Traveler's Repose. Abraham Lincoln supposedly slept there on his travels to Washington, DC. She is welcomed at gatherings as she is an excellent storyteller. One of the stories that I always liked was the one about August Rose. August owned and operated a very successful saloon in Thornwood, a lumber town. Prohibition was enacted and he put a sign in the window of his saloon saying, "On the first of July it will be the last of August."

She is always saying, "Someone ought to write a book about Doc Hull." and was always looking for stories. Once at a luncheon which Ruth and I attended she made this appeal and Ruth said, "Here's his Grandson. He has stories." Jessie didn't miss a beat. She said, "does anyone know any stories about Doc Hull?" So much for my being asked for stories about my Granddad. I felt like the man who went to the psychiatrist. The psychiatrist asked him what was wrong. The man said that, "No one pays attention to me." The psychiatrist said, "Next!"

Once I asked her what kind of stories did she know about my Granddad? She told that once when Granddad had his offices over the Bank building in Durbin, he was called out on a baby case in the Sinks. The Sinks is a place with a lot of under ground, limestone caves. Sometimes the roofs collapse and this makes an indentation in the earth, a sink. As he was getting ready to leave, a man ran up and said, "Doc, there's an old man who's awfully sick and needs to see you." Granddad told the man that he couldn't stop now as he had a baby case in the Sinks and had to leave, but to tell the old man to go and wait in his office and he would attend to him when he got back. After quite a time, Granddad returned and was walking back to his office when the same man called to him and said, "Doc, you remember that old man whom you told to wait in your office, well he died there." Granddad said, "You're a damn liar, Cause when I left I locked the door."

Addendum: Money was often scarce with Granddad's patients. As a result, he was often paid in goods. When it was butchering time he got hams, when gardens came in produce, and so on. One year there was a bumper crop of cucumbers. I think he got over a



hundred bushels. We all ate pickles for a long, long time.

Once a patient was going to give Granddad a cow to pay his bill. As he was leading the animal up the railroad track to Durbin, the train came along and scared the animal. It broke away and ran right into the train's path and was killed. The patient put up a sign next to the slain animal stating, "Here Lies Doc Hull's Bull." I supposed Granddad adjusted the man's bill accordingly.

---

Benjamin F. Poscover\*  
Towson, Maryland  
February , 2001

---

\*) Formally known as "Bool Headed" Poscover. My Grandfather said that I was much too stubborn to just be called "Bull Headed." A much stronger name was needed so he called me "Bool Headed".

